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SIRHAN 8/16/71

1ST LD 103

LOS ANGELES(CNS)--THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY GRAND JURY OPENED AN INVESTIGATION TODAY INTO REPORTS THAT PHYSICAL EVIDENCE FROM THE SIRHAN TRIAL MAY HAVE BEEN TAMPERED WITH SINCE THE CONCLUSION OF THE TRIAL.

TWO JUDGES AND A PROSECUTING ATTORNEY WERE AMONG THE FIRST WITNESSES SUMMONED FOR THE CLOSED-DOOR QUESTIONING.

THE GRAND JURY HEARINGS ARE EXPECTED TO LAST TWO TO THREE DAYS.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY JOSEPH BUSCH HAS SAID THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT ATTORNEYS AND PRIVATE CITIZENS INTERESTED IN THE SIRHAN CASE MAY HAVE HAD ACCESS TO THE COURTROOM EXHIBITS SINCE THE CONCLUSION OF THE TRIAL.

SIRHAN WAS CONVICTED AND SENTENCED TO DEATH FOR THE ASSASSINATION OF SEN. ROBERT F. KENNEDY AT THE AMBASSADOR HOTEL IN JUNE OF 1968.

TAMPERING WITH THE PHYSICAL EVIDENCE COULD AFFECT LEGAL APPEALS IN THE CASE.

THE LEAD-OFF WITNESS AT THE HEARING AT THE HALL OF JUSTICE WAS CHIEF DEPUTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY JOHN HOWARD, WHO WAS ONE OF THE PROSECUTORS IN THE SIRHAN TRIAL.

IT WAS REPORTED THAT HE TESTIFIED REGARDING BACKGROUND OF THE CASE.

THE SECOND WITNESS WAS LOS ANGELES SUPERIOR COURT JUDGE ARTHUR ALARCON, WHO SIGNED THE ORIGINAL ORDER SEALING THE EXHIBITS IN THE CUSTODY OF THE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE.

RETIRED SUPERIOR JUDGE HERBERT V. WALKER, WHO PRESIDED OVER THE SIRHAN TRIAL AND LATER EXTENDED ALARCON'S ORDER, ALSO TESTIFIED BEFORE THE GRAND JURY.

UNDER THE COURT ORDER, NO ONE WAS TO BE PERMITTED ACCESS TO THE PHYSICAL EXHIBITS WITHOUT WRITTEN COURT PERMISSION.

COUNTY CLERK WILLIAM SHARP WAS SCHEDULED TO TESTIFY LATER TODAY.
(PICKUP 5TH PGH: BUSCH SAID XXX)

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